







GEORGE WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON

AND

HIS GENERALS

BY

J. T. HEADLEY

AUTHOR OF "NAPOLEON AND HIS MARSHALS," ETC.

VOLUME I

CHICAGO:

THE HENNEBERRY COMPANY

554 WABASH AVENUE

ALBINO LAC TO VIVI
21.12.2017

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Burr 5-19-42 2 vols.

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TO
HENRY DWIGHT, JR.

THESE VOLUMES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED, AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF
ESTEEM AND AFFECTION BY

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE

The design of the following work is to group around Washington the chief characters and scenes of our Revolution. In all histories of that event, movements and results are given, rather than scenes; and hence, while the plan and progress are clearly developed, the heroic character and thrilling interest of the struggle are in a great measure lost. It thus *necessarily* becomes a matter of business, and the enthusiasm and fervor which characterized it, and indeed were the most remarkable *facts* of all, do not have their due prominence. In histories designed to give all the details and minutiae, both in the civil and military departments, this is almost inevitable. Alison and Napier, however, furnish exceptions to this rule.

It is a little strange that a war, embracing more of the romantic and heroic than any that ever transpired, should appear on record so tame and business-like. But, in the effort to render to every regiment and company its due honor, and to give an exact description of the *manner* in which every battle is fought, the *spirit* is necessarily lost sight of; yet the complete historian feels under obligation to do this. My plan does not confine me to such details; and hence, while I have endeavored to present a correct and accurate description of every battlefield, I have often sunk minor movements and individual actions, in order to prevent confusion. In writing the account of a campaign or battle for a military man, one needs to look on it from a different point of view than he would in writing for the general reader.

Again, in sketching the *men* who led our armies, I have left out those minutiae which would be considered indispensable in writing their separate lives, and pre-

served only their more important characteristic acts. Hence it will be seen, that it is my object to give the eventful part of our Revolution, rather than its detailed history.

Washington, standing amid his band of patriot generals, is to me the sublimest spectacle the history of the world furnishes. In watching them as they move together through the long midnight that enveloped our prospects, one finds something more to record than the chivalrous deeds of brave, ambitious men, or the triumphs of disciplined armies: there is the enthusiastic love of liberty, unconquerable resolution, the firm reliance on Heaven, together with all that is good and heroic in action. Risking their fortunes to gain, it might be, a halter—enduring privations, sufferings, and years of toil for the sake of principle—they present a group on which the eye rests with ever-increasing admiration.

In making out the list of those whom I should introduce, I was forced, in order to preserve any unity, to confine myself to the Major-Generals. These under our system correspond mainly to the Marshals of France—being placed over wings and divisions of an army, and intrusted often with separate commands. Hence, in giving an account of their movements and their battles, the actions of Brigadier-Generals necessarily came in, rendering it impossible afterwards to furnish separate sketches of the latter without producing inextricable confusion.

Some would think that such men as Morgan, and Henry Lee, and Sumpter, and Pickens, and Clinton, and others deserve a prominent place, and so they do; but acting in a subordinate capacity, it is impossible to place them in any other relative position. Lee and Morgan, especially, merit all the praise bestowed on any chief commander. I have therefore endeavored to render them and others justice, in describing the battles they helped to gain; and in an Appendix supplied their biographies. Colonel Hamilton, too, was one of the most important men of the Revolution; but as aid to Washington, his services partook more of the cabinet than the field. Probably there was no officer in the service more capable of

managing an army, or that would have shed greater lustre on our arms than he. But Washington could not spare him from his side. Chivalrous, brave, of profound forethought and transcendent genius, he would have run a military career surpassed by none. Still he rendered greater service where he was—for the daring and resolute youth was one of the firmest props of Washington. But as my design is to sketch the military part of the Revolution, and also to confine myself to the chief commanders, I have not incorporated him in the work.

In collecting materials, I have been surprised at the dearth of details necessary to give one a complete and clear conception of the battles fought. There is not an action in which Bonaparte was engaged so barren of personal incident as every one of those in which Washington took a part. This is doubtless partly owing to the want of newspapers at that time. Our chief cities were in possession of the enemy, and hence every republican press silenced. Besides, it was a period of great dignity both in manner and language, and important characters were not spoken of with that familiarity they now are. This is one great reason why Washington's correspondence and writings appear so formal and restrained.

The incidents which have been preserved have come down to us by tradition. These our Historical Societies have gathered up with great care, though they are scattered over a wide space. Every one, writing of a character or an event, jots down any interesting incident he may possess, whether belonging in that connection or not, solely to preserve it; and thus material lies separate and disjointed through our libraries. If I have in the present work rendered the history of our country any service, it is in gathering and grouping together those hitherto divided and diffused materials. It would be in vain for me to attempt to give all the authorities and papers I have consulted, and to which I am indebted. The Historical Society Library of New York City has been of incalculable service to me; Sparks's collection of American Biographies has saved me a world of trouble, by furnishing me the early history of the separate command-

ers, together with dates and outlines. I have, however, passed from one authority to another, consulting old newspapers, and a large collection of clippings of papers in possession of the Historical Society, so that faithful reference to all my sources of information would be tedious and useless. But in writing the sketches of Arnold and Marion, I have followed almost exclusively the life of the former by Sparks, and of the latter by Simms. Mr. Simms, especially, will find that I have used his interesting biography of Marion without stint. I have sought to be accurate in all the facts stated and hence have left out many things of interest, which I believe to be true, because the evidence rests entirely on some traditional story. That I should frequently disagree with authorities esteemed reliable is inevitable, for they disagree among themselves. When it is remembered that Putnam's share in the battle of Bunker-Hill has been treated with contempt, and even his bravery questioned by some, while others render him the chief glory of the action; and that the fact of Arnold's being in the first battle of Bemis's Heights, which was fought entirely by his division, has been stoutly denied by an officer of rank in the engagement; it cannot surprise any one to find my statements at war with those of *some* writers. Where accounts clash, as they frequently do, in an early history, one must be governed by his own views of the probabilities in the case.

But my great labor has been spent in collecting facts illustrating the battles of the Revolution. I have avoided repetition, as much as possible, but yet have chosen in some places to let this fault remain, in order to secure an object I could not reach without it. In going over the same scenes, and frequently over the same battles, it is not only inevitable, but necessary to a clear narrative. Besides, the intense words of our language are easily exhausted; and one is often compelled, in describing thrilling scenes, to choose between a weak sentence, and the repetition of strong words and perhaps similar comparisons. Repetition has been a standing charge against my "Napoleon and his Marshals"; yet if I were to re-write it a thousand times, I could not avoid it, with-

out making half the scenes tame and commonplace. It seems to me, that a series of sketches ought not to be judged by the same rules as a connected history. They are not designed to have any relation to each other, any more than a separate collection of paintings; and to make one tame, in order to relieve the other, appears a very questionable mode of treating men and their actions. Each should be judged by itself, and if it be complete, and true to nature and fact, that is all that can be expected. Everything in this world, but moral excellence, is a choice between two evils; and one thing has always to be sacrificed to gain another.



WASHINGTON.

G. Washington

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The Circumstances Under Which He Appeared—His Early Life—Analysis of His Character—His Love of Adventure—His Impetuosity—His Self-control—Control over Others—His Patriotism—His Farewell to His Army and Officers, and Congress—His Death.

THOUGH seemingly a contradiction, it is nevertheless true, that time only renders the character of Washington more clear, while the circumstances which developed it became more and more distinct. One would think it indispensable to the correct estimation of a character, that we should have a definite knowledge of the events with which it stood connected, and of the influences that helped to form it. It is so, but we have to lose one thing to gain another—to sacrifice the right understanding which personal knowledge and direct contact give to secure the removed point of an impartial observer. In a struggle like that of our Revolution, characterized as it was by personal animosity, divided sympathies, and, more than all, by many disasters, the leader of it must always be more or less the victim of prejudice. It matters not whether he be a good or bad man, whether eulogized or condemned;—feeling *will* have more to do with the verdict rendered than judgment. Bonaparte did not wish his life written till twenty-five years after his death, as he considered it impossible for the historians of that generation to view his career with an impartial eye. One might as well attempt to give a clear and correct description of the movements of the several columns of an army in a great battle, while he himself is in the smoke and confusion of the fight, as to be an unprejudiced historian of the times in which he lived, especially if they have been marked by the breaking up of old forms and relations, and the institution of new ideas and new

experiments. Hence all great reformers are covered with obloquy in one age and canonized in another. As we recede from the scene of conflict and turmoil, we are apt to become more impartial. The point of observation is the safest point, and this cannot be secured except we stand at a distance. Thus Washington is more highly appreciated the farther removed the scenes become in which he lived. The Englishman forgets his national animosity, so bitter during the Revolution and immediately after it, and the monarchist lays aside his hatred of republican principles, to unite in an eulogy over the incorruptible patriot and hero. The whole world renders homage to the man, and will continue to do so to the end of time; yet no one can now fully appreciate the circumstances in which he was placed.

The American Revolution was an anomaly in the history of the world. For a feeble colony just struggling into existence,—without ships, without a regular army, and without munitions of war, to enter into open combat with the most powerful nation on the globe for the sake of a mere principle, was opening a new page to the eye of monarchs, which it is no wonder they trembled to read. Bounded on one side by a limitless forest filled with hostile savages, and on the other by the ocean, whose bosom was covered with the fleets of her foes, she nevertheless stood up in the simple majesty of justice, and offered battle to the strongest empire in the world. External weakness, internal feuds and foes, the preponderance and power of colonial magistrates and governors, were disregarded, or seen only to excite higher resolution; Massachusetts stood up in the midst of the gathering storm and called aloud to Virginia, and Virginia answered her, sending her cheering voice through the gloom. To bring harmony out of the discord that prevailed, produce strength from weakness, and create resources where there did not exist, was the work assigned to George Washington. How he succeeded amid the difficulties that beset his path, and for a period of seven years, filled as they were with disasters and sufferings, maintained his position, baffled his foes, and finally saved his country, will always remain a marvel to the historian of those times.

Though we may now eulogize his character, we cannot estimate the fiery trial to which he was exposed. The immense burden that lay on his shoulders during those seven years of gloom and darkness, the obstacles that thickened as he advanced, the obloquy that would attend failure, and the misery that a single misstep might inflict on his country, and, more than all, the hopes of liberty intrusted to his care, combined to make him a prey to the most ceaseless anxiety, and render his life one of toil, mental activity, and fearful forebodings, sufficient to wreck the loftiest character. All the details—those petty annoyances, hopes deferred, promises broken, aid refused or plans baffled by professed friends—are left out of the account when we reckon up his qualities and estimate his virtues. Yet these are often the severest tests of a man, and those who have stood firm as a rock and pure as gold under great trials, have fallen or failed in these lesser ones.

That was a gloomy hour for our country, when the British empire roused itself for our overthrow, and it required more than a prophet's vision to see light through the cloud that hung over our prospects. The Indian war had just closed, and the feeble colonies were beginning to emerge from the difficulties and hardships to which they had been exposed, when they were compelled to contemplate a new evil, to which all they had hitherto suffered and borne were but trifles. They had faced the vast wilderness and lurking savage without fear, and bravely encountered every trial, and now, just as the light seemed past and the morning of prosperity dawned, a day so dark and appalling rose before them, that the firmest heart sunk for a moment in despondency. The little wealth they had hoarded, the new comforts they had at length succeeded in gathering around them, must be given up, and a war, the end of which no man could see, entered upon, or the liberty for which they had endured and suffered so long surrendered forever. Without arms or ammunition, without any of the means necessary to carry on hostilities, with nothing to rely upon but the justice of their cause and the protection of Heaven, they nevertheless boldly entered on the doubtful contest.

The trumpet of war sounded through all our peaceful settlements, calling the artisan from his bench, the farmer from his plough, and the man of wealth from his repose, and the shock came. Our cities were ravaged, our towns laid waste, all our strongholds taken, and our citizens butchered, yet still the nation stood firm in her integrity and her purpose. At length defeat came, and with it despondency, and privations, and sufferings unparalleled, till at last the army became almost wholly disorganized, gradually melting away, and everything trembled on the verge of ruin; yet, serene amid the storm, stood Washington, sending his clear, calm voice over the tumult, inspiring hope and courage when both seemed madness. Never before did such destinies hang on a single man, for it was not the fate of a continent which rested on the issue of the struggle, but of human liberty the world over.

Born in Westmoreland county, Virginia, February 22d, 1732, George Washington was forty-three years of age when appointed commander-in-chief of the American army. Educated only in the common schools, he was offered a midshipman's berth in the British navy when but fourteen years of age. This situation, obtained for him by his friends on account of his strong military tendencies, was at length given up at the earnest solicitation of his mother. She could not consent to have him at so early an age depart from under her influence and drift away into the temptations and trials with which his life would be begirt, and so George was kept at home, and the destiny of the world changed. Chosen by Lord Fairfax to survey his wild lands lying amid the Alleghanies, he, then only sixteen years old, departed on his arduous mission. The depths of an American forest, with its hardships and wild freedom, were a better school for the future commander-in-chief of the American army than the British navy would have been, and here he acquired that power of endurance which nothing seemed able to overcome. Now swimming his horse across swollen rivers, now struggling through swamps or over precipices, and now, weary and exhausted, lying down on his bed of boughs—the trees his only covering, the young surveyor took his first lessons in those privations which he after-

wards taught his army so heroically to bear. First as surveyor of Lord Fairfax, and afterwards as public surveyor, he spent three years almost wholly in the open air, sometimes in the forest, sometimes amid the settlements. Ardent, enthusiastic, and bold, the early dreamer stood amid the wilds of his native land, little thinking of the career before him, or of the glorious destiny that awaited his country. His name rudely carved on the bark of a tree, or chiselled in the rock, were the only mementoes he expected to leave of himself, while Fate was silently preparing to grave it on every foot of soil of this broad continent, and trace it above all earthly names on the scroll of fame.

Having performed his duty as surveyor so well, he was chosen adjutant-general, with the rank of major, over a portion of the militia whose duty it was to repel the encroachments of the French and Indians. In the meantime, however, he was absent four months in the Barbadoes with a sick brother. The next year, being then twenty-one years of age, he took the field with his militia to repel the French, who were establishing settlements on the Ohio. But first he was sent as commissioner by Governor Dinwiddie to demand of the French commander why he had invaded the king's colonies. For seven hundred and fifty miles, more than half of the distance through an unbroken wilderness, accompanied by only seven persons, he made his way to the Ohio. Across rivers and morasses, over mountains, through fearful gorges and amid tribes of Indians, the fearless stripling pursued his way, and at length, after forty-one days of toil, reached, in the middle of December, the end of his journey. Having concluded his mission, he set out in the dead of winter to retrace his dreary route. The horses after awhile gave out, and the drivers were left to take care of them, while himself and Mr. Gist pushed on alone on foot through the wilderness. With his knapsack on his back and his gun in his hand, young Washington made his way through the deep snow and over the frozen ground, without a path to guide his footsteps or a sound to waken the solitude, save the groaning of trees swinging to and fro in the storm, or the cry of some wild ani-